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ABSTRACT

A solid approach to preservation can prevent or minimize the losses North Carolina is suffering because library books are falling apart, legal records are disintegrating, and computer files are being lost. Preventing losses before they occur saves tax money. For this and other reasons prevention should be public policy. North Carolina information managers need to be aware of the steps they can take to preserve materials. Facilities considerations include climate control, lighting, storage, and effective housekeeping. Security systems and policies and disaster preparedness planning help protect materials during emergencies. Materials and supplies should be of archival quality, and copying or microfilming processes need to meet preservation standards. Books and serials should be bound. Staff engaged in materials repair must be trained by preservation professionals. Policies and procedures on the use, care, and retention of materials should reflect preservation considerations. The budget needed to carry out these activities is, in the long run, less expensive than repairing or replacing damaged or lost materials. The North Carolina Preservation Consortium responds to preservation needs by providing information, coordinating joint efforts, and leveraging support. The Consortium is a forum through which information managers can share expenses and expertise. It provides disaster preparedness training, and it will inaugurate preservation databases and constituent information programs. Individual, institutional, and corporate members are welcome. (KRN)

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A LONG AND HAPPY LIFE

LIBRARY AND RECORDS PRESERVATION IN NORTH CAROLINA

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PUBLICATION OF THIS BROCHURE, AND THE PROGRAMMING THAT LED TO ITS CREATION, WAS MADE POSSIBLE, IN PART, BY A GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES AND A GIFT FROM THE CANNON FOUNDATION.

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"There I was just wanting to...wish her a long and happy life and she was already gone."

ROSACOKE MUSTIAN IN REYNOLDS PRICE'S NOVEL
A LONG AND HAPPY LIFE

A long and happy life is what we wish for ourselves, our friends and families. Anything less seems a waste and diminishes us. Such untimely loss is not just limited to people, however. We are becoming increasingly aware that our informational and cultural resources are also expiring before their time.

Consider these examples:

- Genealogists checking family trees and lawyers consulting court documents open files to discover contents so brittle that they crumble to the touch.
- A businessman hoping to renovate corporate headquarters finds the only copy of the building plans so badly damaged by mold and insects that it cannot be used.
- A student writing a term paper finds a book vandalized, with the needed information cut out; there is a microfilm copy available, but it was not done to preservation standards so it cracks as it is unwound.
- Families of veterans wanting to check the service records of their loved ones find that the computers used to access this information are obsolete, and the information, which exists in no other format, cannot be retrieved.

We are suffering enormous losses and problems such as these all over the country and in North Carolina as well. Day by day in our state, books fall apart on our libraries' shelves; legal records disintegrate in substandard facilities; computer files are lost through technical problems and machinery obsolescence; and entire offices go up in flames or drown in floods.

When these events occur we lose not only vital business records, legal documents and precious pages from our past, but we also waste the tax or private dollars that must be spent to replace these prematurely deteriorated materials as well as the long hours that must be expended reconstructing the lost data. Yet many such losses often are completely preventable, and the extent of others can be minimized. We are spendthrift in not doing what we can to ensure long and useful lives for our books, vital records, files, and documents.

OUR RECORDS—WHETHER IN BOOK FORM, ON PAPER, OR IN OTHER FORMATS—CONTAIN INFORMATION IMPORTANT TO US.

WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT THESE MATERIALS LAST AS LONG AS THEY ARE NEEDED.

Courtesy of the NC Division of Archives and History.

We North Carolinians have an obligation to ourselves, to those who came before us and to those who will follow us, as well. For all our sakes, we must be good stewards of the books, papers and other documents that underpin our social, legal, economic, and educational welfare. For all generations we must preserve the cultural materials that enhance our lives and are important to our state's history and heritage. Library and records preservation is an area where public and private interests converge.

By library and records preservation we mean all the measures we must take to assure appropriate life-spans for our books, records and manuscripts. While some of these sources contain information that will be needed for just a brief time, others contain information that will be useful for years, decades or centuries. Taking care of these materials to get the desired use out of them is not just common sense; it makes sound business sense as well.

A solid approach to preservation saves not only our records, but also saves us time and taxpayers' money; it should be part of public policy. No responsible manager can afford to ignore preservation, especially in lean economic times, yet too many of us in North Carolina have been unable to address the issue adequately. We can delay no longer.

A crucial stage is upon us. Statistics and surveys show that the problems we have inherited and which require our attention are growing worse throughout the libraries, archives, court houses, record centers, and businesses of the state. A silent, inexorable disease continues to destroy our vital records and documents.

The enemies of our libraries and records lurk all around us—in the air we breathe, in our buildings, in our inattention and bad habits.

The enemy even can be in the records themselves. Most papers manufactured since the mid-nineteenth century are acidic and therefore inherently unstable. Our substandard storage facilities, air pollution and misguided handling practices also contribute to the deterioration process. As a result, many of our manuscripts and printed records are crumbling. It is not just the written word that is threatened. Photographs, motion picture films and television videotapes are disintegrating, and the recorded voices of the past are falling silent. Modern electronic records are also victims of changing technology and will be rendered useless when they cannot be read by newer computer models.

We cannot save everything, nor do we need to. We must, however, preserve what is important, making sure that the materials are kept in useable form for as long as they are needed. Consider the importance of the following types of records:

Public records. Our deeds, wills, tax records, judicial rulings, and state and county laws define our society and govern our legal relations. What would happen if the copies on file were to crumble, burn or otherwise be lost? Our systems could grind to a halt. Yet as individuals and institutions we have often not taken the necessary steps—many of which are easy and inexpensive—to assure the survival of these vital records.

Books and periodicals. Whether serious or frivolous, fact or fiction, books are universal in appeal and enormously important.Yet thousands of volumes "die" prematurely in North Carolina each year, victims of inadequate storage conditions, improper handling, vandalism, poor binding practices, misguided repairs, and damage from disasters or pests. Many of these books are expensive and some are impossible to replace. The teaching and adoption of simple preservation measures would prevent many premature losses and save great amounts of money.

Private records. Correspondence, diaries, account books, speeches, photographs, home movies, and family histories are often one-of-a-kind items that once destroyed can never be replaced. These treasures must be looked after carefully. If they are too fragile for normal

Courtesy of the Southern Historical Collection, University of NC at Chapel Hill.

OUR LEGAL RECORDS DEFINE US.

THIS VOLUME OF COURT RECORDS HAS SURVIVED FROM 1754. WILL OUR IMPORTANT MATERIALS FROM THE 1950'S TO THE PRESENT BE SO LUCKY?

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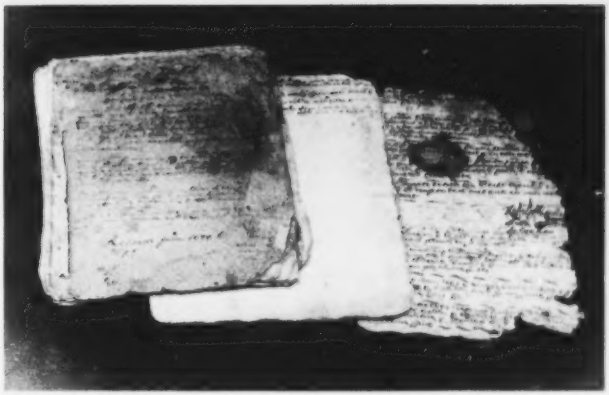
THESE RECORDS ARE BEING LOST THROUGH DECAY...

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RECORDS WORN OUT FROM USE.



Courtesy of the NC Division of Archives and History.

use, they can be copied onto microfilm or permanent (alkaline based) paper. In some cases, the originals should be saved after they are copied. No amount of skill or money can bring back a lost document.

North Carolina repositories contain tens of millions of private, public and printed records, and many are endangered. The time has come for us to become preservation advocates. We have begun to change our habits and attitudes about conserving the natural resources of the world around us, and we must improve our record of preserving our informational resources as well. The longer we delay, the more we will lose, and the more time and money we will spend.

The situation is dire, but there is hope. One of the best ways to solve preservation problems at individual institutions is to join with others and forge networks, pursuing cooperative actions to help everyone in the state.

THESE HAVE BEEN LOST TO DISASTER...

NORTH CAROLINA MUNICIPAL RECORDS BURNED IN A 1974 FIRE.

Courtesy of the NC Division of Archives and History.

In 1989, a diverse group of professionals, technicians, managers, and concerned citizens came together to do just that. The North Carolina Preservation Consortium (NCPC) was incorporated to foster the effective preservation management of the state's cultural and information resources. The Consortium won funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities to study conditions in the state's government centers, offices and libraries and to make recommendations. Discussions were held with concerned citizens as well as with library and archival professionals from across North Carolina. These discussions led to the formation of a state-wide preservation plan.

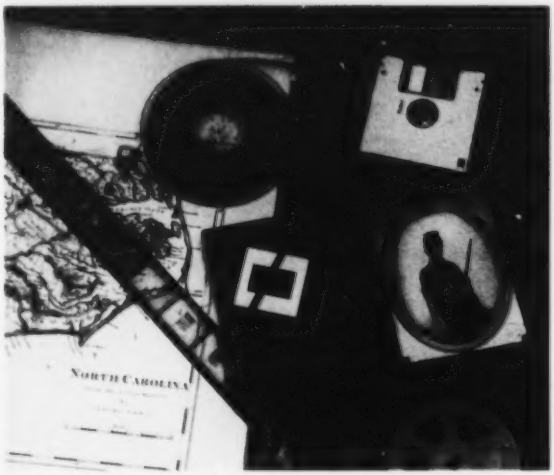
Courtesy of the NC Division of Archives and History.

INFORMATION CAN ALSO BE LOST DUE TO DEVELOPMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY.

LOSSES CAN RESULT FROM HARDWARE OBSOLESCENCE AND THE RAPID DETERIORATION RATE OF COMPUTER TAPES, DISKS AND OTHER HIGH TECHNOLOGY FORMATS.

ALL OUR RECORDS, IN ALL FORMATS, ARE ENDANGERED.

WE MUST CHANGE OUR BEHAVIOR AND PRESERVE THEM.



Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of NC Library at Chapel Hill.

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PREVENTIVE CARE TO ENSURE GOOD HEALTH IS JUST AS IMPORTANT FOR OUR RECORDS AS IT IS FOR US.

DR. S.A. MALLOY OF YANCEYVILLE, NC MAKING HIS ROUNDS, 1939.

Courtesy of the Southern Historical Collection, University of NC at Chapel Hill.

The Consortium's plan emphasizes the obvious: records, like those of us who use them, survive longest and flourish best in wholesome environments. General good care and preventive measures will reduce the need for more expensive conservation measures later on. Thus, we will save both the materials and precious conservation dollars if we prevent or minimize damage before it happens.

The savings can even be meaningful for those books and records designed for limited and immediate use and never slated for permanent retention. It is a waste of time and money to replace such items when they are lost prematurely. Similarly, though information in some books may be obsolete after five years, it may still be necessary to buy some other copies within that time span if they are damaged beyond use in binding and photocopying.

Courtesy of the NC Division of Archives and History.

LIBRARY AND RECORDS MATERIALS NEED GOOD STORAGE CONDITIONS.

A WAREHOUSE IS NOT ENOUGH. RECORDS NEED PROPER SHELVING AND ENCLOSURES; AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS MUST BE MONITORED AND MAINTAINED AT APPROPRIATE LEVELS.

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The benefits of preservation may seem obvious, but we still have a great deal to do before most North Carolina information managers will be well enough informed to practice sound preservation management. They cannot nor can they be expected to do this alone, however. Housekeeping crews, office personnel and public policy makers as well as board members and chief executive officers must all become involved. Everyone who uses a book, works in information storage areas, records or transmits data, or maintains office equipment has an impact on the life span of information and cultural resources in the state.

Preservation should be considered in almost all areas of management, including facilities design and maintenance; emergency preparedness; selection and monitoring of equipment, supplies and sources; staff training; policies and procedures development; and budgeting.

Facilities. The structure and environment in which materials are kept are crucial to their survival. Managing for preservation includes these key issues:

Climate Control: Since materials deteriorate at a faster rate under high temperatures and high relative humidity and since extreme fluctuations of temperature and humidity are also detrimental, books and records should be kept in areas with stable and moderate environments.

Light: Both natural and artificial light weaken and fade bindings and papers. Exposure to all types of light must be kept to a minimum in order to save materials.

Housekeeping: Dust and airborne dirt can abrade and discolor surfaces and destroy texts. Food must be kept away from books and other documents to discourage pests.

RECORDS MUST BE PROTECTED FROM DISASTERS...

SUCH AS THIS 1916 FLOOD IN ASHEVILLE. WITH PROPER PLANNING, DAMAGE FROM LARGE AND SMALL MISHAPS CAN BE MINIMIZED OR PREVENTED.

Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of NC Library at Chapel Hill.

WE MUST ADHERE TO PRESERVATION STANDARDS IN CARING FOR OUR RECORDS.

ONCE THIS NEWSPAPER IS LOST, THE MICROFILM MAY BE THE ONLY COPY LEFT. IF NOT MADE TO PRESERVATION STANDARDS, FILM WILL ALSO DETERIORATE QUICKLY.

Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of NC Library at Chapel Hill.

Storage: Buildings must be weather-proof in order to protect their contents. Paper based, electronic and all other forms of records as well as computers are susceptible to damage from the elements.

Emergency Preparedness: Disasters come in many forms. Floods can build over time from slow leaks, or they can strike suddenly. Being prepared for water damage and other disasters, such as fire, tornado, vandalism, or theft, can minimize loss and improve chances of salvage.

Security systems and policies: Institutions need central alarm and monitoring systems for theft and fire protection. Policies governing use of materials should permit access but also be designed to prevent vandalism and theft.

Emergency planning: Institutions can insure that many disasters are prevented and that easier and speedier recovery is achieved by implementing written plans of action for diverse emergencies. Management must support staff training, develop policies and keep insurance coverage up to date.

Equipment, supplies and services. The materials and supplies institutions use must be of archival quality; and the copying processes employed must meet preservation standards.

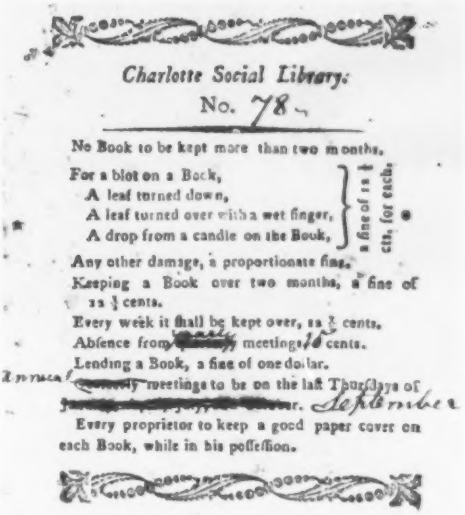
Copying: Materials may need to be copied because of the poor condition of the original or because of the users' requirements. Care must be taken to chose the appropriate reproductive format and to see that the original is not damaged in the process.

Microfilming: If microfilm is chosen as the appropriate copying format, and the film is expected to last, then the filming should be done to preservation standards. Most commercially produced film is not done to these standards and will deteriorate fairly quickly. To insure an extended life span, master negatives also should be stored to preservation standards.

Binding: The binding of books, periodicals and serials should extend, not diminish, their useful shelf-life. Standards and recommendations of the Library Binding Institute in its

ALL BOOKS AND RECORDS MUST BE HANDLED AND USED CAREFULLY.

THE WISDOM OF THIS HAS BEEN EVIDENT FOR A LONG TIME, AS SEEN IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY RULES OF THE CHARLOTTE SOCIAL LIBRARY.



Charlotte Social Library:

No. 78.

No Book to be kept more than two months.

For a blot on a Book,
A leaf turned down,
A leaf turned over with a wet finger,
A drop from a candle on the Book,
} a fine of 12½ cts. for each.

Any other damage, a proportionate fine.

Keeping a Book over two months, a fine of 12½ cents.

Every week it shall be kept over, 12½ cents.

Absence from [illegible] meetings, 10 cents.

Lending a Book, a fine of one dollar.

[illegible] meetings to be on the last Thursdays of [illegible] September.

Every proprietor to keep a good paper cover on each Book, while in his poſſeſſion.

Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of NC Library at Chapel Hill.

publication, *Library Binding Institute Standard for Library Binding*, should be used in all decision making. *A Librarian's Guide to the LBI Standard* published by the American Library Association is another useful resource.

Human resources and material management: What staff and users know and what they do affects the life span of the materials.

Training & Education: Staff must be trained by a preservation professional before undertaking any repair work on materials. When seeking professional help for materials with great intrinsic and artifactural value, staff should first consult a guide such as *Choosing and Working With a Conservator* by Jan Paris (published by Southeastern Library Network). Numerous other types of training are appropriate to each professional or technical level within a business, library or records center. Information about workshops, standards, cooperative programs, and state-wide networks can be had from professional organizations, peers and information clearing houses.

Policies and procedures: Institutional policies on the use, care and retention of materials must reflect preservation considerations. Aspects to consider in formulating such policies include legally defined retention schedules; the condition, frequency of use and life expectancy of materials; the media on which the information is based; and the appropriate methods of handling, use and storage of particular formats.

Budget. Budget considerations should include all aspects of preservation from roof and plumbing maintenance to staff training. It is more cost effective to pay for preservation on

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a day-to-day basis than to pay more later for lost or damaged items. Aside from dollars spent, the legal aspects and time costs stemming from information loss must be considered.

These are some of the issues and problems that each institution must address, but each entity can realize tremendous savings in time and money, and maximize its efforts, by cooperating with other institutions across the state.

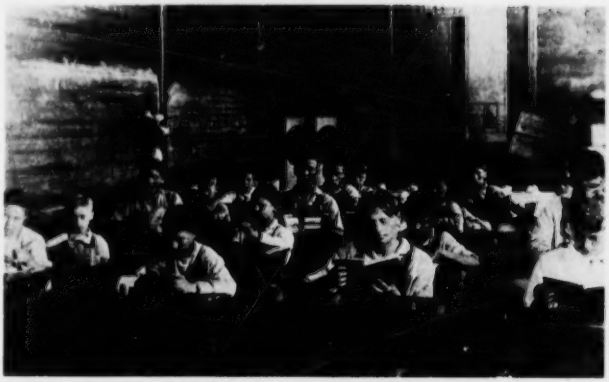
Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of NC Library at Chapel Hill.

IT'S UP TO ALL NORTH CAROLINIANS TO HELP.

EVERYONE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE, JUST AS THIS 1946 SHEET MUSIC FEATURING NORTH CAROLINA NATIVE KAY KYSER SUGGESTS. AND EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO MEMBERSHIP IN THE NORTH CAROLINA PRESERVATION CONSORTIUM.

ALL OF US MUST LEARN HOW TO MAKE OUR LIBRARY AND RECORDS MATERIALS LAST.

WE ALL CAN LEARN WHAT IS APPROPRIATE TO EACH OF US, AS THESE DIVERSE STUDENTS ARE DOING IN LENOIR COUNTY, CA. 1924.



Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of NC Library at Chapel Hill.

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The benefits of such cooperation are many. Since we all need to learn many of the same skills, it only make sense that we come together for appropriate training and cooperate in information sharing. We can also help each other by sharing experience and expertise. Cooperative purchasing networks and joint funding strategies can be worked out as well. Fortunately, there is already a way in which we can all come together for the common good in the North Carolina Preservation Consortium. NCPC was organized to benefit both individual institutions and the state.

The non-profit Consortium collects dues from individual, institutional and corporate members and seeks grants from government and private sources in order to fund its programs and goals. While working to establish an institutional base, the Consortium is also responding to the needs of the state in a rational, prioritized way.

In the area of programming, the Consortium is first providing disaster preparedness training workshops. This fills an acute need in our state, provides an arena in which small efforts can have large results, and leads naturally to inter-institutional cooperation.

WE CAN SUCCEED ONLY THROUGH TEAM WORK AND COOPERATION.

THESE CITIZENS WORKING TOGETHER TO BRING A ROAD INTO JACKSON COUNTY IN 1911 UNDERSTAND THIS PERFECTLY.

Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of NC Library at Chapel Hill.

Among other initial services to be inaugurated are the creation of data bases of preservation information, services and source lists to be made available to institutions across the state. The Consortium will also concentrate on keeping constituencies informed through established channels on preservation activities in North Carolina.

Consortium plans include reaching out to various groups and functioning within already existing frameworks. The Consortium will educate the general public and local and state government offices on the importance and funding priorities of preservation. It will work with in-state library schools, archival programs and continuing education programs to make sure that preservation issues are brought to the attention of professional and technical staffs. It also will pursue funding for cooperative preservation ventures across the state.

Courtesy of the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR!

JUST AS WE HAVE WORKED FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, WE MUST ALSO WORK FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR LIBRARY AND RECORDS MATERIALS. A LONG AND HAPPY LIFE FOR ALL OF US IN NORTH CAROLINA DEPENDS ON IT.

In summary, the Consortium's mission is:

- to inform for preservation
- to coordinate for preservation
- to leverage support for preservation

The Consortium can do these things only with your participation and support. Individuals, institutions and corporations, both public and private, are encouraged to become members of the Consortium. Help us set priorities, define goals and take action.

By supporting the Consortium and its goals, you will be working with individuals from all over North Carolina to maintain the state's vast informational base. This is a crucial underpinning upon which our current welfare and future success rests.

Information, in all its forms, must survive as long as it is needed. In preserving our library materials and vital records, we are working for all the people of North Carolina. A long and happy life for our records is important to a long and happy life for us.

~ ~ ~ ~

For further information about membership, and to learn what you can do to advance preservation in your business, institution or organization and thus join with others preserving North Carolina's books, archives, records, and documents, contact

The North Carolina Preservation Consortium
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Cover photograph of Matilda Smith of Chatham County courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of NC Library at Chapel Hill.

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